Ensuring Safe Drinking-Water & Sanitation For All: Our Efforts

Urgent action is needed globally and locally to achieve safe and sustainably managed water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) for all, in order to prevent devastating impacts on health of millions of people. The world is seriously off-track to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 on water and sanitation for all, by 2030. The **Women’s Health and Education Center (WHEC)** is dedicated to the well-being of all people and guided by science, supports this initiative, WASH in schools, in Kerala, India. WASH-related health burden ranging from – child death, diarrheal disease, enteric infections and related sequelae, malnutrition, maternal and neonatal infections, infections from unsafe healthcare waste management and antimicrobial resistance to name a few. Impacts on well-being: Dignity, personal safety (fear, anxiety, stress), school attendance, livelihoods (economic productivity, poverty).

WHEC integrates WASH into health programs such as focusing on antimicrobial resistance, cholera prevention and control, emergencies, infection prevention and control, maternal, neonatal and child health, non-communicable diseases, nutrition and universal health coverage can increase synergies and impacts.

**The Women’s Health and Education Center’s Actions on WASH**

WHEC aims to – support health sectors and health promoting schools in effectively addressing WASH-related health risks; and assist non-health sectors in understanding and maximizing the positive health impacts of their work. Visit our interactive Continuing Medical Education (CME) page, serving all UN Member States: [http://www.womenshealthsection.com/content/cme/](http://www.womenshealthsection.com/content/cme/)

**Water & Sanitation – Essential to Improve Maternal and Child Health**

The provision of WASH in healthcare facilities serves to prevent infections and spread of disease, protect staff and patients, and uphold the dignity of vulnerable populations including
pregnant women and disabled. Yet, many healthcare facilities in low-resource settings lack basic WASH services, compromising the ability to provide safe care and presenting serious health risks to those seeking treatment. Open defecation & unsafe drinking water perpetuates a vicious cycle of disease and poverty. There is further need for research on the links between sanitation and health, and on the operation of the sanitation service chain and optimal methods for implementation.

WHEC’s publications are aimed at a broad range of audience, and it is hoped the everyone who reads this comes away with a realization of the complexity of the issues at stake and an appreciation of the work that lay in front of us.

WHEC works with partners and UN System, to promote health systematically, and focuses on eliminating hunger, promoting food security, food safety, and healthy diets, preventing and controlling transboundary diseases, zoonoses, and antimicrobial resistance (AMR), to protect the livelihoods of farmers from the impacts of plant and animal diseases, and to increase the sustainability and resilience of agrifood systems, with One Health benefits.

WHEC promotes One Health approach.

**Exploring the Relationship between Sanitation and Mental Health and Social Well-being:**

When people perceive or experience a lack of privacy and safety, during open defecation or when using sanitation infrastructure, this can negatively influence their mental and social well-being. The authors of this study found that perceptions and experiences of privacy and safety are influenced by contextual and individual factors, such as location of sanitation facilities and user’s gender identity, respectively. Privacy and safety require thorough examination when developing sanitation interventions and policy to ensure a positive influence on the user’s mental and social well-being. The world has seen a dramatic increase in out-of-school rates, for both girls and boys in developing countries.

**Our Key Areas of Actions:**

1. Guidelines and tools; Worldwide dissemination via our (Learning, Innovating, Networking, for Knowledge) *LINK ACCESS PROJECT*. Details available @ [http://www.womenshealthsection.com/content/documents/LINK-Access-Project.pdf](http://www.womenshealthsection.com/content/documents/LINK-Access-Project.pdf)
2. Country Support. Empower countries through technical cooperation and capacity-building on national policies and regulatory frameworks and national target-setting.
3. Evidence and monitoring. Monitor, research and report reliable and credible WASH data to inform policies and programs including WASH risk factors and burden of disease.
4. Coordination and Advocacy. Coordinate and engage with multisectoral partners, global and regional platforms to strengthen WASH regulation policies.
5. WASH in health programs. Support coordinated actions between WASH and health programs to increase synergies and impacts.

6. Response to emerging issues. Respond to issues such as climate change and WASH, and the impact of water scarcity on public health.

Join our efforts; we welcome everyone!